

The Model of Integrated Marketing Communication: Who has the Role to Influence Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is proposes a theoretical framework to investigate the models of integrated marketing communication that can influence the consumer behaviour, and the development a model of integrated marketing communication. The research goals aim the following aspects: (a) The analyze of the IMC concept; (b) Identifying and analyzing the main models of integrated marketing communication that can influence the consumer behaviour; (c) Identifying the variables that will be included in the conceptual model of integrated marketing communication proposed. A review of the integrated marketing communication literature show the fact that were developed a series models of integrated marketing communication which has the role to influence the consumer buying behavior, but these not capture the correlation between the following factors: sociological variables, external stimuli, integrated marketing communication and consumer behavior. The method used was the secondary research in order to fulfill the research objectives established. The major result of this paper consists in proposing of a new conceptual model of integrated marketing communication that captures the correlation between external stimuli - sociological variables - integrated marketing communication - consumer behavior.

Keywords: integrated marketing communication; model; consumer behavior; sociological variables; external stimuli

JEL Classification: M30; M31; M37

1. Introduction

With an increase in global competition, technological advances, and fast informed customers, it is important for businesses to make a powerful impact on target audiences and markets. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is one of the most important communications trends adopted all over (Sisodia & Telrandhe, 2010). IMC is undoubtedly the major communications development of the last decade of the 20th century (Kitchen & Schultz, 1999, 2000); this despite the fact that most of the history of IMC approaches, theory, and contribution is very recent in nature. More organizations consider IMC to be a key competitive advantage associated with marketing (Kitchen & Schultz, 2001; Weilbacher, 2001).

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According to Nowak & Phelps (1994) the success of an integrated marketing communication campaign could be observed in the positive change of brand image and behavior. The goal is to create a holistic campaign - in addition to synergy - which ameliorates brand image and brand awareness whilst induces behavioral changes.

In practice, the impact of integrated marketing communication activity on consumer behavior is mostly sequential, particularly in situations where the buying process involves a several steps. However, the timing of exposure to this sequential communication represents an aspect still unexplored in the context of resource efficiency. Integrated marketing communication offer the possibility of organizations to communicate with their target audiences through multiple channels such as advertising by mass-media, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, online marketing etc. Consumer purchasing behavior can be influenced by the communicational messages transmitted through these channels of communication (Gopalakrishna & Chatterjee, 2006).

The research problem consisted in identification those gaps that exist in the relevant literature regarding the models of integrated marketing communication developed with the aim to influence consumer buying behavior.

Taking into account that in the relevant literature, although were developed a series models of integrated marketing communication, these not capture the correlation between sociological variables, external stimuli, integrated marketing communication and the consumer behavior.

2. Literature Review

The integrated marketing communication is looked upon as the “voice of the company”, this being a means through which may establish a dialogue with consumers and build the relationships with them (Keller, 2009). In the development of an integrated marketing communications program can be taken into consider a number of factors, such as product availability, stage of the product life cycle, market share of product, the positioning (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn, 1993).

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As) see Integrated Marketing Communication as “*a concept of marketing communication planning that reorganizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategies roles of a variety of communication disciplines – general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations and combines these disciplines to provide clearly, consistency and maximum communication impact*” (1989). Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn (1993) defined IMC as “*concept of*

marketing communication planning that combine and evaluate strategic role of different communication discipline to get the clarity, consistency and greater impact". "IMC involves proper control over the information available for the company in order to acquire new customers while retaining the loyal ones (Duncan & Caywood, 1996). "IMC is a strategic business process which designs, develops, executes and evaluates coordinated, measurable, and persuasive marketing communications. The following participants are involved in IMC: consumers, customers, potential customers, other market players, relevant external and internal audience (Schultz & Schultz, 1998). According to Gronstedt (2000): "IMC is a strategic management style, which is conducive to the goals of the company and the brand by focusing resources on every point where a contact with the key-consumer or with other stakeholders happens in order to create a profitable relationship". IMC is "the notion and the practice of aligning symbols, messages, procedures and behaviours in order for an organization to communicate with clarity, consistency and continuity within and across formal organizational boundaries" (Thoger, Fuat & Torp, 2008). IMC can be defined as the interactive and systemic process of cross-functional planning and optimization of messages to stakeholders with the aim of communicating with coherence and transparency to achieve synergies and encourage profitable relationships in the short, medium and long-term (Porcu, Del Barrio-Garcia & Kitchen, 2012).

Over time, the specialists in various fields have developed a number of models that describe the process of communication. Harold D. Lasswell proposed, in 1948, next logical demarche that must occur in a communication process (Lasswell, 1948): a) who communicates? b) what communicate? c) by what means? d) to whom communicates? E) with what effects communicate?

H. Lasswell's formulation is considered to be a classical one, present in all theories of communication, mass communication, sociology, psychology and political science. In H. Lasswell's model, the answer to these questions involves identifying the components of a communication process: communicator - message - channel - receiver - effect. Also, the model includes communication sphere consistent with the role proposed through the distribution of participants: the study of management, the study of communication content, selection of the means of communication, the target audience analysis and analyzing the communication process effects.

This model was improved by the American engineer Claude E. Shannon, becoming a benchmark for many specialists. It includes five elements described in a linear fashion (Shannon, 1948): the source of information - the transmitter - channel - receiver - consignee.

Later, C. Shannon's ideas were interpreted by R. Jakobson. Jakobson's model distinguishes six elements, or factors of communication, that are necessary for

communication to occur: (1) context, (2) addresser (sender), (3) addressee (receiver), (4) contact, (5) common code and (6) message. Each factor is the focal point of a relation, or function, that operates between the message and the factor (Jakobson, 1960).

Tom Duncan and Sandra Moriarty (1998) developed a model of communication based on relational marketing. Using three key points where the two disciplines intersect - messages, stakeholders and interactivity - the authors develop a model based on marketing communication. They demonstrate how interactive can be communication at three levels - corporate, marketing and marketing communications (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). Because stakeholder relationships are strongly influenced by messages from and to a company, a model built on relationship with a brand should consider the brand messages of all internal sources. The model captures the interaction between the different sources of messages in an organization and its various stakeholders (Tom Duncan & Moriarty, 1998).

James W. Peltier, John A. Schibrowsky and Don E. Schultz (2003) proposed a model which conceptualizes the relationship between database management and interactive integrated marketing communication programs. Using a database-driven CRM program provides the mechanism for firms to create and distribute a customized, interactive, integrated marketing communication program. In their model, database management refers to the process of collecting customer data, integrating the data to form customer segments, and then using other data to build predictive models for categorizing other customers and prospects. The IMC portion of their model relates to the development of targeted, personalized and interactive communication programs based on information learned in the data analysis stage. (Peltier, Schibrowsky & Schultz, 2003)

In the opinion of John F. Tanner Jr. and Mary Anne Raymond the communication process illustrates how messages are sent and received. The source (or sender) encodes, or translates, a message so that it's appropriate for the message channel - say, for a print advertisement, TV commercial, or store display - and shows the benefits a value of the offering. The receiver (customer or consumer) then decodes, or interprets, the message. For effective communication to occur, the receiver must interpret the message as the sender intended. Interference, or noise, can distort marketing messages. Interference includes any distractions receivers and senders face during the transmission of a message. Purchasing a product provides the sender with feedback, which often tells the seller that you saw information and wanted to try the product (Tanner Jr. & Raymond, 2011).

3. The Model of Integrated Marketing Communication

Communication model proposed, Figure 1, is a holistic model based on the correlation between a series of factors which can influence in a favorable way consumer buying behavior, thus: (a) sociological variables - the family, reference groups, membership groups, social class, culture and subculture; (b) external stimuli - the price, quality, packaging, brand, emotional value, attributes of the product, offers; (c) integrated marketing communication - communicational message, communication tools, such as: Advertising through mass-media, Sales promotion, Direct marketing, Public relations, The sales representatives, Online marketing.

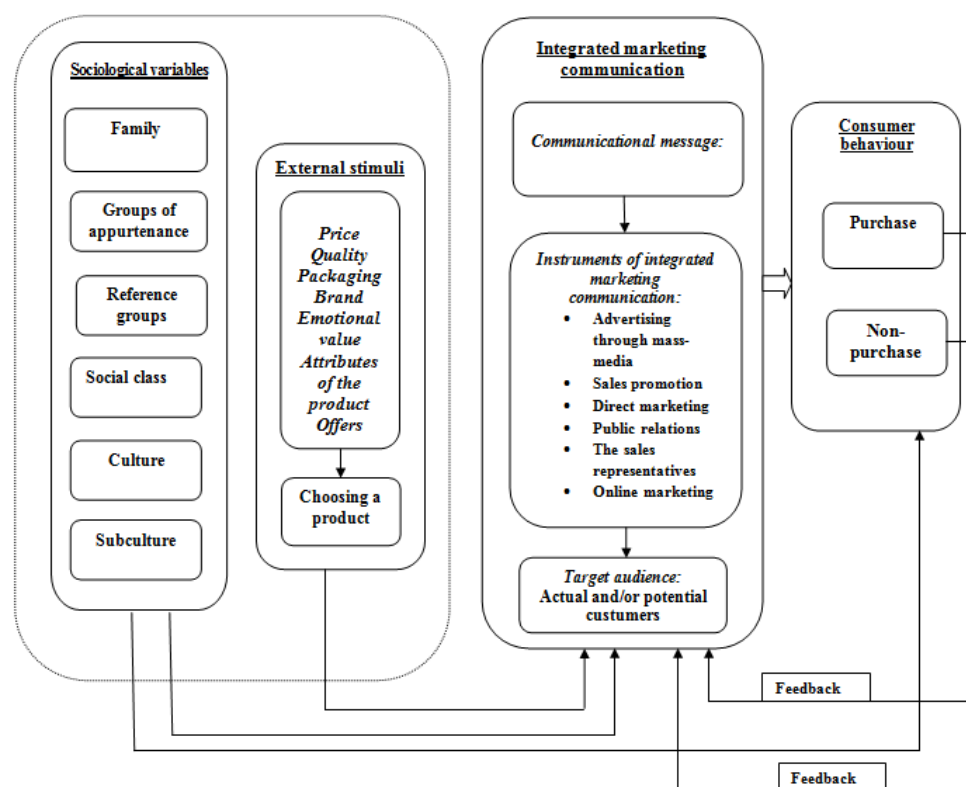


Figure 1. Model of integrated marketing communication

Source: IMC model developed by author

In this model the sociological variables, respectively family, the reference groups, membership groups, the class social, culture and subculture contribute to changing consumer buying behavior. **The family** is composed by two or more people living

together who are related by blood or marriage. It is a part of a household which consists of individuals living singly or together with others in a residential unit. Consumer behavior is influenced by the relationships within families. The family has a strong, most immediate and most pervasive influence on decision-making (Durmaz & Zengin, 2012). Also, system of communication and the interactions between family members, make that this entity have a system of buying and consumption well contoured which must be brought to the attention of researchers in the field of integrated marketing communication (Cătoi & Teodorescu, 2004).

The reference groups can be defined as any person or group of people who significantly influences an individual's behavior (Sakpichaisakul, 2012). The beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors, and norms of the group are perceived to have relation upon the assessment, behaviors, and aspirations of another individual (Eva & Judit, 2010). Individuals' behavior is strongly influenced through numerous groups. Individuals reference group are those groups that have a direct or indirect influence on the person's attitudes or behavior. Group having a direct influence on a person are called **memberships group**. These are group to which the person belongs and interacts. Some are primary groups. With which there is fairly continuous interaction, such as family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers (Katherine, 2009).

The social class refers to grouping of people who are similar in their behavior based upon their economic position in the market place (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1990). Every society stratifies its members into social classes according to their values to the society. The members of social class share common values and ways of thinking, speaking and behaving (Abraham, 2011). Also, knowing the specificities existing between various social categories allows achieving a market segmentation particularly useful for the development of integrated marketing communication programs (Cătoi & Teodorescu, 2004).

The culture is the essential character of a society that distinguishes it from other cultural groups. The underlying elements of every culture are the values, language, myths, customs, rituals, laws, and the artifacts, or products that are transmitted from one generation to the next (Lamb, Hair and Daniel, 2011). Culture is the most fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behavior (Pandey & Dixit, 2011). Courses on culture and behavior of individuals with similar values formed smaller groups are called **sub-culture** (Durmaz, Çelik and Oruç, 2011). The marketer must determine whether the belief, values and customs shared by member of a specific subgroup make them desirable candidates for special marketing attention (Tyagi & Kumar, 2004). Their careful study and consideration of the particularities behavioral, can bring great benefits the activity the integrated marketing communication of an organization (Cătoi & Teodorescu, 2004).

The external stimuli, respectively the price of a product, the quality, the packaging, brand, the emotional value, attributes of the product, offers can constitute key factors in designing a communicational message, influencing thus the consumer decision to choose and purchase a product. Therefore any organization before you design and implement an integrated marketing communications program should identify and analyze the external stimuli that can be taken into account when designing a communicational message, rational or emotional type, and the sociological factors that contributes significantly to changing in a favorably way to the purchasing behavior of consumers. The tools of integrated marketing communication, respectively advertising through mas-media, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, the sales represantives, online marketing represent the means through which the communicational message reaches the target audience which it is addressed, more precisely the potential customers and/or actual of an organization.

In this model, the integrated marketing communication has the role to determine an actual behavior, more precisely the purchase of a product and/or service by the consumers. Where consumers have manifested an purchase behaviour to the product and/or service, the integrated marketing communication model will be maintained or improved, and if this behavior was of the non-purchase, the integrated marketing communication model will be reviewed and modified, so this generates a positive effect on consumer purchasing behavior.

4. Conclusions

This paper provides a picture of what represent IMC and contribute to a better understanding of the concept. A review of the integrated marketing communication literature show the fact that, over the time, were developed a series models of integrated marketing communication which has the role to influence the consumer buying behavior, but these not capture the correlation between the following factors: sociological variables, external stimuli, integrated marketing communication and consumer behavior.

Also, in the literature seems to be lacking a broad model that includes all these factors, as well as and a specific study regarding the nature and impact of these factors on the consumer behavior. Therefore, the proposed model contributes to the literature in this field, offering a new perspective regarding the marketing communication with actual and prospective clients, in order to determine the actual purchase behavior of their.

5. Future Research Directions

Step 1: Taking into account the fact that the conceptual model of IMC proposed is very complex, it will be tested empirically on diverse consumer groups, for to identify those variables sociological, external stimuli and integrated marketing communication tools that influence in a greater measure the consumer buying behavior. Also, will be empirically tested the relationships between variables proposed in the model, and its validation.

Step 2: The conceptual model of IMC will be improved and it will include only those sociological variables, external stimuli and tools of integrated marketing communication which influencing in a greater measure the consumer buying behavior.

Step 3: Will be empirically tested the relationships between variables that will be contained in the new model of IMC, and it will be validated.

6. Acknowledgement

This work was cofinanced from the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2013-2020, project number POSDRU 159/1.5/S/142115 “Performance and excellence in doctoral and postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain”.

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